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# **COMMUNITY DESIGN SUB-ELEMENT**

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## **CITY OF SUNNYVALE GENERAL PLAN**

December 1990

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## Contents

<b>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>COMMUNITY CONDITIONS</b>	
Chapter 1. Historic Development Pattern	13
Chapter 2. Development Trends	15
Chapter 3. The City's Image	20
Boundaries	
Gateways	
Nodes	
Landmarks	
Districts	
Neighborhoods	
Chapter 4. The View from the Road	38
Public Landscaping Programs	
Pedestrian Pathways	
Streetscape Improvements	
Signs	
Chapter 5. Private Development	50
Site Design	
Building Design	
Chapter 6. Public Facilities	75
Sunnyvale's Public Buildings	
Sunnyvale's Outdoor Public Places	
Public and Quasi-Public Facilities	
<b>COMMUNITY CONDITION INDICATORS</b>	<b>92</b>
<b>GOALS AND POLICIES</b>	<b>93</b>
<b>GLOSSARY</b>	<b>106</b>

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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The Community Design Sub-Element addresses the quality of the physical environment in both the public and private realms. Sunnyvale is a growing City where there are still opportunities to mold future development, while preserving the best of the present. The purpose of the Community Design Sub-Element is to establish design policies to guide future growth and enhance existing development. The Sub-Element is based on the premise that good design is good for everyone: that businesses, residents and visitors benefit from an environment which functions well and is attractive and engaging. The Sub-Element also recognizes that design policies and regulations must be reasonable and should promote, not discourage, economic development.

The Community Design Sub-Element is different from other General Plan Elements because it deals with many non-quantifiable issues and qualities, such as identity, comfort, beauty and fun. Good design can bring these qualities to the built environment. Good design makes the difference between a strong, positive image for Sunnyvale and a vague one; between tree lined neighborhood streets and bare asphalt; between architecture that inspires and non-descript buildings; between the playful sculpture in front of the Library and an empty bench. Sunnyvale is fortunate to have a strong economy which has created an attractive community along with future opportunities to improve. Improving the built environment may not require many grand gestures, but simply doing many little things better.

This sub-element follows the same format as Sunnyvale's other General Plan Elements and Sub-Elements. The Community Design Sub-Element has three sections: 1) community conditions; 2) community condition indicators; and 3) goals, policies and action statements. The first section on community conditions is the largest and has six chapters;

- |                                  |                           |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. Historic Development Patterns | 4. The View from the Road |
| 2. Development Trends            | 5. Private Development    |
| 3. The City's Image              | 6. Public Facilities      |

A brief summary follows on each of these chapters, as well as the goals and policies section and the relationship of the Community Design Sub-Element with other Sunnyvale General Plan Elements.

### Chapter 1. Historic Development Pattern

This chapter discusses how Sunnyvale has changed from an agrarian community to one of the high technology centers of the world. The pattern of development in the past is

still very much a part of how Sunnyvale looks and functions today. The early development pattern established Sunnyvale as a complete City with industry, commerce and housing. Sunnyvale's growth happened in two phases; early development downtown and later suburban development surrounding the downtown core.

### Major Findings

1. Early development concentrated around the train lines downtown and was a fine mix of businesses, industry and homes.
2. Most of the City's growth happened in the 1950's and 1960's. Nearly 65% of the residential units and 52% of the non-residential buildings were constructed between 1950 and 1969.
3. Development after 1950 was concentrated in large tracts developed exclusively for a single type of land use. This development was horizontal, spread out and oriented to the automobile.

### Chapter 2. Development Trends

This chapter discusses local development trends and their potential impact on the shape of the City. These trends indicate that Sunnyvale is entering a third growth phase characterized by increasing private redevelopment, the desire for higher and more dense buildings and a predominance of multi-family projects in new housing construction. Based on past trends, new higher density development will not encroach on existing single family neighborhoods as these projects are most likely to be built on rezoned industrial or commercial properties. The possibility of light rail and the Downtown revitalization may also have a significant impact on how the City looks and functions in the future.

### Major Findings

1. Sunnyvale is the fourth largest employment center in the Bay Area.
2. The Association of Bay Area Governments predicts that by the year 2005 Sunnyvale will have 148,610 jobs, 7,600 more jobs than in 1990, and a population of 132,700 which is 12,300 more residents than in 1990.
3. Vacant and agricultural land in Sunnyvale has decreased from 813 acres in 1981 to 340 acres in 1990. As Sunnyvale becomes more completely developed, private landscaped areas, public plazas and City parks will assume more importance as compensation for the loss of greenery, open vistas and informal play areas.

4. Most of the new housing built in the past five years has been apartments or condominium type units; 72% of the new units were apartments, 23% were condominiums or townhomes and only 5% were detached single family units.
5. In the past five years, new housing has been predominantly medium or high density projects as a result of scarce, more expensive land and fewer vacant sites in existing single family districts.
6. In the past 10 years, medium and high density housing has been built on land already zoned for higher density or on land rezoned from industrial or commercial districts. Between 1980 - 1990, Sunnyvale rezoned 250 acres for multi-family housing and an additional 317 acres for mobilehome housing.
7. In the past 10 years, the amount of land zoned for single family housing has increased by 25 acres as a result of redeveloped school sites. In 1990, 23% of the land in Sunnyvale is zoned for detached single family housing and 11% is zoned for multi-family housing which includes mobilehome parks.
8. Much of the new construction is now built on privately redeveloped properties, not vacant land. In 1988 and 1989, 38% of all new projects were private redevelopment and 98% of all housing units were built on redeveloped sites.

### Chapter 3. The City's Image

Chapter 3 on the City's image discusses four basic design features which can strengthen and enhance Sunnyvale's image. These features are: clear boundaries, attractive and distinctive gateways, special landmarks and unique districts. The discussion on districts includes the Downtown Specific Plan, the El Camino Real business district, Mathilda Avenue, Evelyn Avenue and Sunnyvale's neighborhoods.

### Major Findings

1. Defining the City's boundaries with street trees, medians, signage or enhanced natural features will create a stronger identity for Sunnyvale.
2. Gateways on major roadways into Sunnyvale are unique opportunities to create a positive, lasting image of Sunnyvale. Gateways can be distinguished with landscaped medians, signs, unique architecture, plazas and information centers. Currently, there are no City monument signs or other features distinguishing the entries to Sunnyvale, however, a project to identify gateways has been budgeted for 1993/1994.

3. Sunnyvale's landmarks help orient people to their location and enrich the City's identity. There are possibilities for new landmarks at the Lawrence Expressway/Highway 101 site and Downtown.
4. Memorable districts heighten the awareness of Sunnyvale as a special place.
5. Sunnyvale has two historic districts; the Murphy Avenue Historic District and the Taaffe-Frances Street Heritage Housing District. Policies and regulations have been established to preserve and enhance these unique districts.
6. Specific plans and design guidelines can be used to create memorable districts. Sunnyvale has two existing Specific Plans and is developing a Specific Plan for the Downtown. A Specific Plan for the Downtown is needed to establish cohesive and attractive design standards, appropriate uses and densities, and architecture which will help revitalize the Downtown. Specific Plans or Design Guidelines would also be appropriate for the El Camino Real business district, Mathilda Avenue and Evelyn Avenue.

#### Chapter 4. The View from the Road

The view from the road affects the daily lives of Sunnyvale residents and is one of the most lasting images visitors have of the City. This chapter discusses City programs which improve the roadway environment. These programs include: a Public Landscaping Program for medians and other street landscaping, a Street Tree Service Program which installs and maintains the City's street trees, programs for pedestrian pathways, the City's undergrounding of utilities requirements, fencing standards and the City's sign regulations.

#### Major Findings

1. The Association of Bay Area Governments estimates that 120,400 people live in Sunnyvale in 1990 and 141,000 people work here. By 2005, the number of people living and working in Sunnyvale is expected to increase, resulting in higher traffic volumes on the City's roadways.
2. As part of the Street Landscaping Program, the City has installed and maintains approximately 60 acres of public landscaping on Sunnyvale's roadways.
3. Landscaped medians help identify major thoroughfares, increase traffic safety by separating oncoming cars, beautify the streetscape and make motorists more comfortable by reducing the perceived road width and providing interesting scenery.

4. The Sunnyvale Street Tree Service Program is responsible for selecting, planting and maintaining the City's street trees. There are now about 31,900 street trees in Sunnyvale.
5. Street trees add to the value of private property, provide shade and habitat for wildlife, contribute to fresher air and reduce reflected heat from buildings and pavement.
6. The City requires pedestrian walkways for new development in commercial and residential districts. Along major thoroughfares, pedestrian walkways can be made more comfortable with trees for shade, traffic buffers and benches for resting.
7. Since 1975, Sunnyvale's requirements to underground utility wires on or adjacent to private properties and the City's funding of undergrounding along major roadways has resulted in a less cluttered and more attractive streetscape.
8. Fencing is a major streetscape element along some of Sunnyvale's roadways. The City is studying ways to improve the appearance of fencing because of problems with private maintenance and design.
9. Sunnyvale's Sign Ordinance insures that signage is attractive, safe, compatible with the building architecture, not distracting to motorists and in balance with other elements in the streetscape.

## Chapter 5. Private Development

The Private Development Chapter addresses development on private properties and discusses the design features of site plans and buildings. This chapter is meant to provide a vocabulary for design review and an understanding of basic design concepts, in addition to forming a basis for design policies. A well designed project will function efficiently, be compatible with surrounding properties, have architectural merit and enhance the image of Sunnyvale.

### Major Findings - Site Design

1. The building location, driveways, parking, auxiliary structures, exterior mechanical equipment, lighting and service access are functional elements of the site plan influenced by the nature of the intended use.
2. Good site design accommodates natural features such as solar orientation, climate, mature trees and scenic vistas.
3. Mature trees add to the beauty and comfort of the built environment, enhance property values and help blend new development with surrounding properties.



4. Site plans which create view corridors into the site and are oriented to the adjoining street patterns generate interest and are integrated with surrounding development.
5. Private development can be integrated with the public roadway by establishing a sense of enclosure and uniform landscape standards.
6. Sunnyvale's Zoning Ordinance establishes building setbacks and coverage standards for fire safety, for privacy and to maintain light, air and open space between buildings. These standards help preserve the unique rhythm and spatial qualities of districts and neighborhoods.
7. Well designed entries to a site help avoid confusion and make a positive first impression.
8. Site plans with areas which are easily identified as public and private spaces are more legible and help people to understand how they should act and where they should go.
9. A memorable place is created through site design where each design element has a complementary relationship to the other design elements. Design features which help create an identity are clear boundaries and similar detailing such as light fixtures, railings, landscaping and signage.
10. The recently established art in private development program has resulted in artworks being required on seven sites in Sunnyvale.
11. Site plans which appeal to the senses engage people in a direct way. Landscaping, pleasant outdoor areas, artworks and a sense of mystery will create a stimulating and engaging environment.
12. Sites need to be designed to be safe and accessible. Safe environments have good public visibility, adequate night time lighting, well designed circulation systems and quick, unobstructed access routes for fire and police services. Accessible environments are designed so they can be understood, navigated and enjoyed by everyone, including people who are physically handicapped.
13. Site design requirements need to be reasonably balanced to assure a competitive economic development environment for the City.

#### Major Findings - Building Design

1. Good architecture has intrinsic value and is also appropriate to its context. A well designed building compliments Sunnyvale's image, raises people's spirits, inspires creativity and heightens individual as well as cultural identity.

2. The functional elements of a building are walls and a roof for structural support and protection from the weather, and openings such as windows and doors, for light, air and access.
3. Rooflines are a prime indicator of building style and one of the most critical elements in determining compatibility with neighboring buildings.
4. Legible buildings have main entries which are easy to locate and oriented to the street for visibility.
5. Windows link the exterior and interior environments. In commercial districts, visibility of the activity inside stores and restaurants draws customers and creates an entertaining street environment.
6. Below grade parking can be detrimental to the architectural integrity of a building if it is not integrated with the building features and the ground. Concrete garage walls can be integrated with the architecture by using the same building materials, colors and detailing, and be integrated with the ground through berming, landscaping and screened entries.
7. The style of a building reflects the cultural and aesthetic values of a certain time. Buildings that are nondescript lack this refinement.
8. The scale of a building is its size in relation to its surroundings and people. Tall buildings need features such as recessed spaces or extended porticos on the ground level in order to retain a comfortable human scale.
9. There is often a predominant building shape and horizontal or vertical orientation in a district. New construction needs to have a similar shape in order to blend with the district.
10. Most buildings have three components; a base, middle and top. If these components are articulated with changes in building planes, colors, materials and rhythm, it breaks the structure into smaller parts and the building will look less massive.
11. A building with order and proportion has clarity and is one where all of the functional and decorative building elements are in scale with each other.
12. Building articulation is an important means of creating interesting rhythms with changing patterns of light and shade.

13. Exterior materials are the most visible sign of quality and can enhance or detract from the architectural style and surrounding properties. Substantial, high quality materials look attractive and insure durability. Changes in texture will add richness and tactile appeal to the building surface.
14. Appropriate building colors depend on the style, size and location of the building. Colors look different depending on the amount of color and surrounding hues. Colors which look appropriate on a small color rendering can be overwhelming on a large building.
15. Building design requirements need to be reasonably balanced to assure a competitive economic development environment for the City.

#### Chapter 6. Public Facilities

The Public Facilities chapter addresses the design of public and quasi-public properties which includes City properties, State and Federal facilities, schools and quasi-public facilities such as utilities. The section on City facilities discusses public buildings and vital outdoor public places, including parks, courtyards, public art and downtown pedestrian enclaves. This chapter is the final piece in a comprehensive plan for the function and appearance of Sunnyvale.

#### Major Findings

1. Approximately, 13.4% of the land in Sunnyvale is zoned for public and quasi-public use and as a result, the design of these facilities has an important impact on the City.
2. Sunnyvale's public buildings have good accessibility and reflect the community's values of quality and efficiency.
3. Identification of the Civic Center could be improved along Mathilda Avenue and El Camino Real.
4. Sunnyvale maintains 20 acres of landscaping around the City's public buildings at an 1990 annual cost of \$407,370. This landscaping is a unique feature which gives the buildings a public character.
5. In Sunnyvale, outdoor public places are found in City parks and recreational facilities, small plazas and courtyards around public buildings and downtown in public pedestrian enclaves.
6. Sunnyvale has 18 parks, 2 municipal golf courses, a municipal tennis center and Baylands Park which combined provide 370 acres of public open space.

7. The City shares in the maintenance of 14 school sites which has resulted in significant improvements to the appearance of school playing fields.
8. There are no formal public plazas or squares in Sunnyvale, but there are small informal courtyards around the City's public buildings which provide comfortable places for waiting or relaxing. The Community Center has a large courtyard area used for civic events. There may be a need for a large formal plaza to accommodate bigger civic events elsewhere in Sunnyvale.
9. As of July, 1990, Sunnyvale's public art program has resulted in 1 mural, 5 outdoor sculptures and 27 other works of art which are displayed in many parts of the City.
10. Public parking structures need to be located so that they do not block important commercial activities or vistas into the downtown from major roadways. Below grade parking is preferable because of the limited land area downtown.
11. Sunnyvale has no jurisdiction over the architectural and site design or maintenance of many public facilities owned by other government agencies. As a result, it is important that the City continue to pursue strong intergovernmental cooperation.
12. There are 11 elementary schools, 3 junior high schools and 1 high school in Sunnyvale which are open in 1990. These public schools add significantly to the quality of the City's neighborhoods.
13. State and Federal facilities occupy 192 acres within the City limits and another 650 acres within the urban service area when including Moffett Naval Air Station.
14. Flood control channels, the Hetch-Hetchy right-of-way, P. G. and E. transmission tower easements and the Southern Pacific railroad lines are all areas which generally look unattractive because of weeds, litter and the lack of landscaping. More could be done to make these areas as attractive as other private and public properties in Sunnyvale.

#### Relationship with other General Plan Elements

The Community Design Sub-Element is an optional General Plan element not required by California Government Code, Section 65032. It is Sunnyvale's policy to adopt General Plan Elements and Sub-Elements which go beyond the State's minimum requirements and address the broad range of physical, social and economic issues important to comprehensive planning. The Community Design Sub-Element is meant to establish

design policies for public and private properties. These comprehensive, City-wide design policies relate to many of the City's other General Plan Elements, including the:

1. Transportation Element
2. Land Use Sub-Element
3. Housing and Community Revitalization Sub-Element
4. Open Space Sub-Element
5. Cultural Arts Element

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## SUMMARY OF GOALS AND POLICIES

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This section is a summary of the goals and policies contained in the Community Design Sub-Element.

**GOAL A: PROMOTE SUNNYVALE'S IMAGE BY MAINTAINING, ENHANCING AND CREATING PHYSICAL FEATURES WHICH DISTINGUISH SUNNYVALE FROM SURROUNDING COMMUNITIES AND BY PRESERVING HISTORIC BUILDINGS, SPECIAL DISTRICTS AND RESIDENTIAL NEIGHBORHOODS WHICH MAKE THE CITY UNIQUE.**

Policy A.1: Identify the boundaries of the City with attractive and distinctive features.

Policy A.2: Ensure that new development is compatible with the character of special districts and residential neighborhoods.

Policy A.3: Support measures which enhance the identity of special districts and residential neighborhoods to create more variety in the physical environment.

**GOAL B: CREATE AN ATTRACTIVE STREET ENVIRONMENT WHICH WILL COMPLIMENT PRIVATE AND PUBLIC PROPERTIES AND BE COMFORTABLE FOR RESIDENTS AND VISITORS.**

Policy B.1: Maintain and provide attractive landscaping in the public right-of-way to identify the different types of roadways and districts, make motorists more comfortable and improve the enjoyment of residential neighborhoods.

Policy B.2: Provide a safe and comfortable system of pedestrian and bicycle pathways.

Policy B.3: Minimize elements which clutter the roadway and look unattractive.

**GOAL C: ENSURE THAT BUILDINGS AND RELATED SITE IMPROVEMENTS FOR PRIVATE DEVELOPMENT ARE WELL DESIGNED AND COMPATIBLE WITH SURROUNDING PROPERTIES AND DISTRICTS.**

Policy C.1: Place a priority on quality architecture and site design which will enhance the image of Sunnyvale, create a vital and attractive environment for businesses, residents and visitors, and be reasonably balanced with the need for economic development to assure Sunnyvale's economic prosperity.

Policy C.2: Review site plans to insure the design is compatible with the natural and surrounding built environment.

Policy C.3: Ensure that site design creates places which are well organized, attractive, efficient and safe.

Policy C.4: Encourage quality architectural design which improves the City's identity, inspires creativity and heightens individual as well cultural identity.

Policy C.5: Ensure that buildings are appropriate to their context and designed to be compatible with surrounding properties and special districts.

**GOAL D: PROVIDE PUBLIC FACILITIES WHICH ARE ACCESSIBLE, ATTRACTIVE AND ADD TO THE ENJOYMENT OF THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT.**

Policy D.1: Ensure that Sunnyvale's public facilities are easily identified, accessible, attractive and representative of the community's values and aspirations.

Policy D.2: Maintain beautiful and comfortable outdoor public places which provide a shared sense of ownership and belonging for Sunnyvale residents, business owners, employees and visitors.

Policy D.3: Work with outside government agencies to achieve attractive public and quasi-public facilities consistent with the quality of development in Sunnyvale.

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## HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT PATTERN

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Sunnyvale began as an agrarian community. Early settlers were drawn by a mild climate, abundant sunshine and the fertile alluvium soil. Calabazas Creek and Stevens Creek ran through the area. There was also great scenic beauty in the San Francisco Bay to the north and the Diablo and Santa Cruz Mountain ranges which rimmed the valley. These natural attributes are still an important part of Sunnyvale's living environment and identity.

The development of Sunnyvale began in earnest in 1864, when the Central Railroad built a line from San Francisco to San Jose with a stop at Murphy Station. Sunnyvale was promoted as the "City of Destiny". The original vision for Sunnyvale laid the foundation for its future growth. Early Sunnyvale residents wanted their community to be a complete City where people could live, work and play. This is a much different place than a resort or bedroom community. The concept of a complete city is still at the foundation of what Sunnyvale is and strives to be.

Industry first came to Sunnyvale after the 1906 earthquake. The first industries located at the center of town, close to railroad lines and other businesses. Housing also located downtown and was laid out in a traditional grid pattern, most efficient for the flat terrain of Sunnyvale. Simple, small bungalows and revival style homes were predominant. The downtown grew as a mix of uses in close proximity and walking distance of each other.

Transportation routes also played a significant role in the City's development. The earliest transportation facilities were the railroad, the Port of Sunnyvale and El Camino Real, The Kings Highway for the early missionaries. The paving of El Camino Real in 1913 heralded the arrival of the automobile and a profound change in the pattern of development. The automobile allowed businesses and homes to spread out, rather than concentrated downtown or along transportation routes. Sunnyvale Naval Air Station, which was built in 1933 and later renamed Moffett Field, also had a significant impact on the City's future economic development.

By the end of World War II, Sunnyvale had made the change from an agricultural community to an industrial center. This change set the stage for the boom decades of the 1950's and 1960's. Nearly 65% of the City's residential units existing in 1990, and 52% of the non-residential buildings were constructed between 1950 and 1969.

New development covered large areas of Sunnyvale and resulted in dramatic changes to the character and form of the City. Unlike the mix of uses at the core, new districts were more distinct and large tracts of land were developed exclusively for residential,



commercial or industrial uses. Different uses were separated and the increased distances made pedestrian travel difficult. New development had a form which was low, horizontal, systematic and oriented to the automobile. This is still the predominant form of development in Sunnyvale.

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## DEVELOPMENT TRENDS

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Sunnyvale has experienced two phases of development: early development downtown with a mixture of land uses on small lots and a grid street pattern, and later suburban development surrounding this core with large, homogenous districts, bigger lots and more curvilinear street patterns. Sunnyvale may now be entering a third growth phase characterized by increasing private redevelopment, higher and more dense structures, a predominance of new multi-family housing and a return to a finer grain of land uses evident in modern mixed use projects. This third growth phase will be influenced by future decisions concerning floor area ratio restrictions and the jobs and housing redistribution being considered in the "Futures" study.

In the next decades, the community will be managing crucial questions on housing and transportation which will have a direct impact on how Sunnyvale looks and functions. The City will be deciding how much of a shift to make from horizontal to vertical living, what qualities of the living environment to preserve and what parts to change. Because Sunnyvale is a place where people want to live and work, the demand for growth creates many opportunities, as well as some challenges.

Sunnyvale is one of the most prominent cities in the 9 County San Francisco Bay Area. The City is known for a progressive government and leading, high technology industries. Sunnyvale is one of the Bay Area's busiest employment centers with 140,990 jobs in 1990. Only the cities of Oakland, San Francisco and San Jose have more jobs. In Santa Clara County, Sunnyvale is second only to San Jose in size and population. The Association of Bay Area Governments predicts that Sunnyvale will have 148,610 jobs by 2005 and the City's population is expected to increase from 120,400 in 1990 to 132,700 residents in 2005. Sunnyvale will be faced with the potential of 7,620 more jobs and 12,300 more residents in the next 15 years. These figures may change depending on the outcome of the "Futures" study. Given these regional development pressures, Sunnyvale in the future will look different in some ways from Sunnyvale today.

Continuing growth has resulted in diminishing vacant and agricultural land in Sunnyvale. Vacant lots and agricultural fields or orchards provide open space and greenery within communities. Cities with scattered development punctuated by orchards and open fields look and feel different than fully developed cities. As Sunnyvale becomes more completely developed, private landscaped areas and City parks will assume more importance as compensation for the loss of greenery, open vistas and informal play areas which were provided by undeveloped land.

Vacant and agricultural land in Sunnyvale has steadily decreased from 813 acres in 1981 to 340 acres in 1990. Of this 1990 total, 220 acres are zoned industrial, 29 acres are

zoned for commercial or office use and 91 acres are zoned residential. Most vacant industrial land is owned by large corporations, such as Lockheed Missiles and Space Company, and typically reserved for their future expansion. The vacant commercial land remaining in 1990 is also concentrated on a few key parcels, the largest properties being the orchards at Mathilda Avenue and El Camino Real. In contrast, most of the 1990 vacant residential properties are small lots scattered throughout Sunnyvale. There are only 5 vacant residential sites which are over 2 acres and two of these sites have already been approved for new housing.

The diminished supply of large tracts of vacant land has several implications for the City's future development.

1. There will be development pressure for taller and denser buildings to accommodate the continuing demand for new housing and business expansion.
2. Some industrial businesses may find it more difficult to expand given the City's FAR restrictions and the scarcity of vacant land.
3. There will be increased redevelopment pressures as existing buildings age and land prices increase, making these sites more viable for redevelopment.

Some of these impacts are already being felt in Sunnyvale. Almost all new housing built from 1985 - 1990 was apartment or condominium type units, due largely to the demand for housing and efforts to achieve a better jobs/housing balance in the City. As shown in Figure 1 only 4.5% of the new housing constructed was detached single family homes. The net number of single family homes is only 3% when adjusted for demolitions. Most of the detached single family housing has been built on surplus school sites. Since 1980, portions of six school sites have been redeveloped for housing. At present, Sunnyvale's school districts plan only one additional school closure, so there are likely to be even fewer detached single family homes built in the future.

Figure 1  
HOUSING CONSTRUCTION 1985 - 1990

	<u>Year Constructed</u>					
	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	TOTALS
Single family det	48	80	22	22	23	195 (4.5%)
Single family attach	373	192	278	43	117	1003 (23%)
Duplex	4	4	0	3	0	11 (0.2%)
Multi-family	1257	525	131	411	825	3149 (72.3%)
TOTALS	1682	801	431	479	965	4358 (100%)

Almost three quarters of the housing constructed in the last five years has been apartments. Most of the remaining units have been condominium type housing. It is possible in the next decades, that the percentage of new ownership housing may change depending on tax incentives, lending practices, market conditions and City policies. However, the pressure to build higher density housing is likely to be an ongoing trend regardless of the type of tenancy. Whether new higher density residential projects are for rentals or ownership, the features of these projects are very similar. Most new housing in Sunnyvale has been large projects with two to three story structures over below grade parking and self enclosed, distinct environments. Newer, higher density projects look very different from traditional single family neighborhoods or even many of Sunnyvale's older apartment or condominium complexes.

This new form of medium and high density housing is a compact environment. Many more people can live in less area and still enjoy recreation facilities, landscaping and other amenities on the site. One of the virtues of this compact form is that it can bring more people closer to vital services, such as shopping and transportation systems. This results in less dependency on the automobile. This compact housing form is also more versatile in the way it can blend with a variety of other land uses, as evident in new mixed use projects in Sunnyvale. Denser, more compact housing projects will probably continue to be the predominant type of new housing, in part because it can provide some solutions to local and regional transportation and housing problems.



Charles Avenue Center is one of the new mixed use projects in Sunnyvale

Even though most new housing has been medium or high density residential, this has not significantly changed existing single family neighborhoods. In the past ten years, only 3.68 acres have been rezoned from detached single family densities to higher densities, while 28.2 acres have been rezoned from school sites to single family residential. The net effect is that more land is now reserved for detached single family housing than ten years ago. In 1990, 23% of Sunnyvale is zoned for detached single family as shown on Figure 2.

Figure 2  
**ACRES BY ZONING CLASSIFICATION**  
December, 1989

Zoning Classification	Acres	Percent
Single Family Detached	3,377	22.7
Multi-Family	1,674	11.3
Commercial/Office	650	4.4
Industrial/Warehouse	2,863	19.2
Public and Quasi-Public	1,992	13.4
Streets and Highways	2,384	16.0
Baylands	1,928	13.0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>14,868</b>	<b>100.0</b>
Moffett NAS (not part of total)	650	

More land has also been rezoned for multi-family housing. Between 1980-1990, 567 acres have been rezoned from commercial and industrial zoning districts to multi-family residential and mobilehome park districts. New multi-family housing has primarily located in the northern part of Sunnyvale, along El Camino Real or Evelyn Avenue and in transitional neighborhoods already zoned for increased density. It is possible that more land will be rezoned from industrial and commercial to residential uses, given the City's policies and past actions to balance jobs with housing and the continuing demand for homes. The City has undertaken a "Futures" study to identify more sites for potential residential redevelopment.

Many new projects are now built on redeveloped properties, not vacant land. In 1988-1989, 38% of all projects built in Sunnyvale were private redevelopment projects, where property owners demolished existing buildings to clear the site for new development. During these same two years, 98% of the total new housing units were built on redeveloped properties. One of the first strong indications of this redevelopment trend was the 1987 residential rezoning of three properties with existing industrial businesses. Within two and a half years of the rezoning, developers had cleared the sites and built 784 new units.

Vacant land may be scarce in Sunnyvale, but there is a significant amount of development potential in private redevelopment. The rebuilding trends of the past few years are likely to continue given a healthy economy. In areas of Sunnyvale which are rebuilding there is an opportunity for positive change. This third phase, the rebuilding phase, may be as important as the previous two growth phases in determining the quality of life in Sunnyvale.

Future development will effect the way the City looks, feels and functions. There is the possibility of light rail extending through the northern employment centers and into downtown Sunnyvale. Light rail would introduce a whole new look to the City and a modern transit convenience. A light rail system could help regenerate the downtown and stimulate innovative types of residential or mixed use projects along the route. The Downtown Specific Plan may also result in positive changes to the cultural, social and business environment downtown. These changes could help create a downtown which is attune to the aspirations and future needs of the community.

Sunnyvale is not fully developed in any static sense. Private redevelopment and new transportation systems will change the way the City looks and functions. Sunnyvale is in a rebuilding phase which presents exciting opportunities to welcome and mold the future, while preserving the best of the present.

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## THE CITY'S IMAGE

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A City's visual image is a complex relationship between private and public development patterns and the natural features of the land. Ideally, this visual image should match the values and ambitions of a community. The form and features of a city should create a place which residents can identify with and visitors can understand. A strong, clear visual image is like a firm handshake. It is a satisfying encounter.

Sunnyvale is a complete City with many positive attributes. It is a place of scenic beauty with safe, attractive neighborhoods, vital commercial districts, leading industries, efficient roadways and enjoyable recreational areas. While 98% of the City is already built, there is an ongoing process of refining and enhancing the attributes of the built environment. These refinements improve the living environment and create a clearer image of Sunnyvale. The City of Sunnyvale is well known as a progressive community and a respected regional leader. The City's visual image should match these accomplishments. A quality visual image will help Sunnyvale maintain a position of leadership in an increasingly competitive economic environment.

Sunnyvale's visual image could be improved by more defined boundaries and gateways into the City and more distinctive landmarks and districts. **Enhancing the City's boundaries, gateways, landmarks and districts will help articulate an image of Sunnyvale as a complete City and a special place to live and work.**

### Boundaries

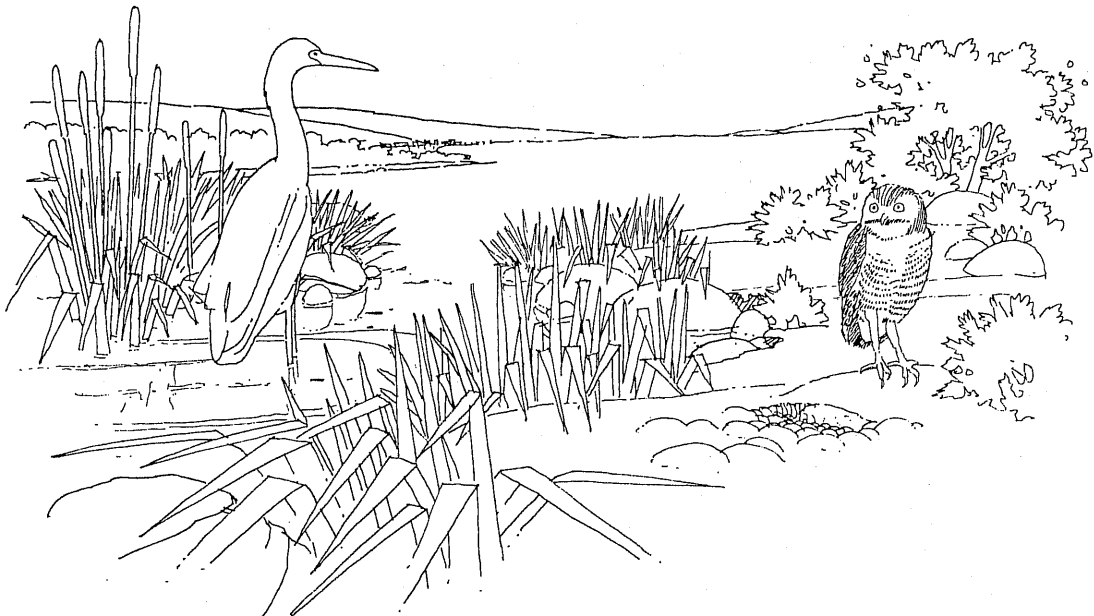
Sunnyvale is in a modern metropolitan area where the boundaries of one city blend into the next. There are few visual clues to distinguish Sunnyvale from adjoining cities. This sprawl creates confusion and a lack of orientation in the physical environment. A defined boundary helps orient travelers and also creates a stronger identity for the City. Strong edges help define an area that will stand out in people's minds as a unique place.

Edges can be natural or man made features, such as rivers or freeways. Another way edges are created is to have an inside that is different from the outside. Cities not in metropolitan areas are often defined by the difference between the rural countryside and more dense development inside the city limits. Sunnyvale is distinguished from some surrounding cities by the amount of landscaped medians, street trees, private commercial landscaping, undergrounded utilities and sign controls. These features create an attractive roadway environment which is different from surrounding cities which do not have similar programs and regulations. Sunnyvale also looks different because of the extensive use of monolithic sidewalks, instead of the curbside landscaping found in several adjoining cities.

In metropolitan areas, it is possible to clarify boundaries by using distinctive landscaping, signage and medians along the city limits and highlighting natural features on the edges. Sunnyvale's perceived boundaries are: Caribbean Drive on the northern edge, Lawrence Expressway on the eastern edge, Homestead Road on the southern edge and Highway 85 on the southern part of the western edge. The perceived edges of Sunnyvale are shown on Figure 3, a map of the City's form. Sunnyvale's real municipal boundaries are not straight lines running directly along these major roadways. Often the municipal boundaries zig-zag across the roadway, making it more difficult to define the edges. There are also two natural features, Stevens Creek and the San Francisco Bay, which run along the City limits, but do not create strong visual boundaries because they are not visually or physically accessible.

These roadways and natural features offer the best opportunities to define and clarify the City's edges and make Sunnyvale distinct from neighboring cities. Edges are opportunities to promote Sunnyvale. If these areas are attractive and interesting, it makes a visual statement that Sunnyvale is someplace special to live, work and visit.

The City already has plans for a park which will highlight the northern boundary along the bay. Baylands Park at Highway 237 and Caribbean Drive is scheduled for completion in 1992 and will celebrate the unique natural environment of San Francisco Bay. The goal of Baylands Park is to protect, enhance and interpret the natural wetlands of the Bay, while providing outdoor recreational opportunities and facilities. There is also the possibility of extending the park along Caribbean when the City's land fill closes in 1994. Sunnyvale's Public Works Department is studying the feasibility of revegetating this area to create a park. This revegetation would result in a continuous greenbelt and wetlands area extending from Highway 237 to the end of Caribbean Drive, resulting in an appealing scenic edge on the northern City limits.



Cranes, egrets and burrowing owls are part of the unique environment at Baylands Park.



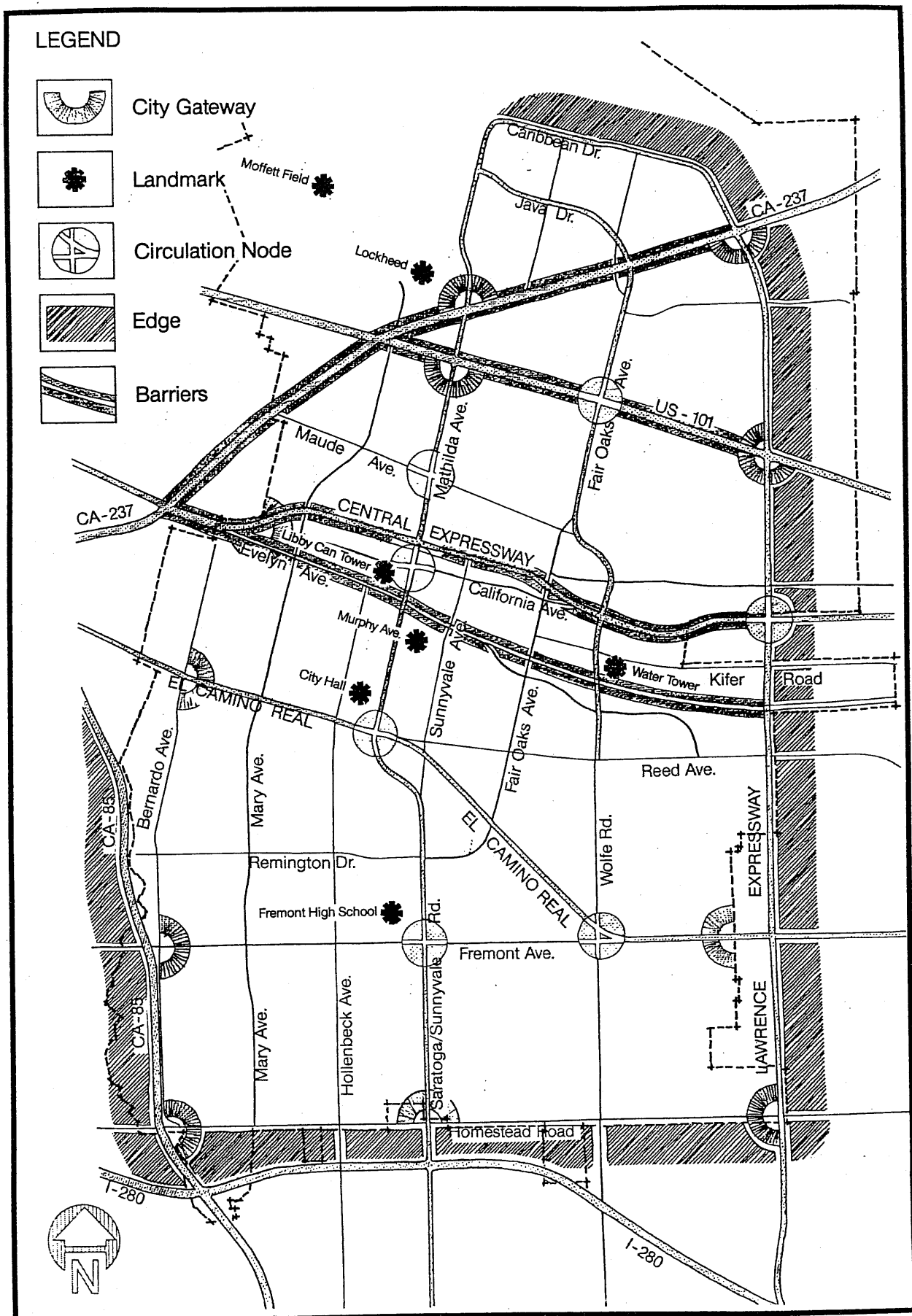


Figure 3: City Form

Stevens Creek is co-terminus with a third of the City's western border and would have been another opportunity for a scenic edge. However, homes have been built all along the Creek, obscuring the view and preventing easy access. There is an open vista of part of the Creek from Highway 85. This open area between the Creek and the Highway is generally perceived as part of Sunnyvale, but is actually a park owned by the City of Mountain View.

Roadways can also create interesting edges. There are opportunities to accentuate the City boundary along the northern side of Homestead Road and a large portion of Lawrence Expressway. One way to make this boundary distinct is with similar landscaping and medians, and with special lighting and roadsigns. Continuity of design along the roadway can create an edge. Similar street trees on both sides of a street for a significant length will create a unified identity for the street and a strong border. Unique medians, light standards and road signs can accentuate this border. Medians are not possible on Homestead Road because they would eliminate access and needed traffic lanes. Lawrence Expressway already has medians which have been scheduled for landscape improvements.

Some roadways act as barriers. Instead of unifying the City, they split it into different districts. In Sunnyvale, Highways 101, 237 and Central Expressway create barriers which visually and functionally segment the community. Neighborhoods and business on either side are separated by limited access to these roadways and the wide expanse of pavement. This separation is intensified by the noise, fumes and speed of the automobiles. The negative effect of these barriers can be minimized by introducing design elements which relate these roadways to the rest of the community and by emphasizing the roadways crossing these barriers.

### **Gateways**

All along the edges of a city there are gateways where people enter or leave. These gateways are typically on roadways, but can be on other transportation routes, such as railroad lines and pedestrian pathways. A gateway can also be a place where motorists leave a freeway to enter the local street system.

The importance of each gateway is generally tied to the number of people crossing that location. A gateway can also be important because of historic significance or because a community would like to emphasize a certain area of the City.

Gateways are the doorsteps of a community. They are places to say hello and goodbye. Gateways are where people arrive and get their first impressions of the City, and places where people leave, taking with them a lasting image. Gateways help define the City's edges and create a heightened sense of identity. Gateways also create a precedent for design standards that follow along the major City thoroughfares. It is important to make these locations distinctive and attractive.

Gateways can take on many forms and there are many ways a gateway can be distinguished. The most common method is to install City signs at these locations. Once a City sign is installed, the environment around that sign takes on special meaning. Perceptually, the impression of that place becomes identified with the City. If it is a noisy, cluttered environment that will be a lasting image of the City. A clean, beautiful environment will also leave a lasting image, but a much more favorable one. Care should be taken in choosing sign locations for Sunnyvale so that the association between the place and the City is a positive one. Care should also be taken in designing the sign, so that the sign itself creates a positive image.

Gateways can be distinguished by encouraging unique development at these locations, such as buildings with a distinctive size or architectural design. Gateways can be made more attractive with special medians, pavements and landscaping. Monuments or sculpture could also be used to create a sense of prominence or elegance. Sunnyvale's Art in Private Development Ordinance requires artworks with new development at gateways. Since gateways are places where visitors enter the City, some gateways may be good locations for traveler's information centers, where people can stop for directions. These centers could have civic organizations directories, announcement kiosks, telephones, benches and a City map. An information center would make a strong statement about Sunnyvale's hospitality.



A visitor's information center could help identify important city gateways.

Gateway scale and design should vary depending on the location. A large scale is appropriate at freeway entries and the design should be simple so that it can be understood by passing motorists. A gateway on a smaller roadway or at an intersection will be closer to the motorist and therefore the scale can be more intimate. The design can also be more complex and still be legible. Pedestrian gateways can have an even smaller scale. Some design elements should be the same for all the gateways, so there is a unifying theme identifying Sunnyvale.

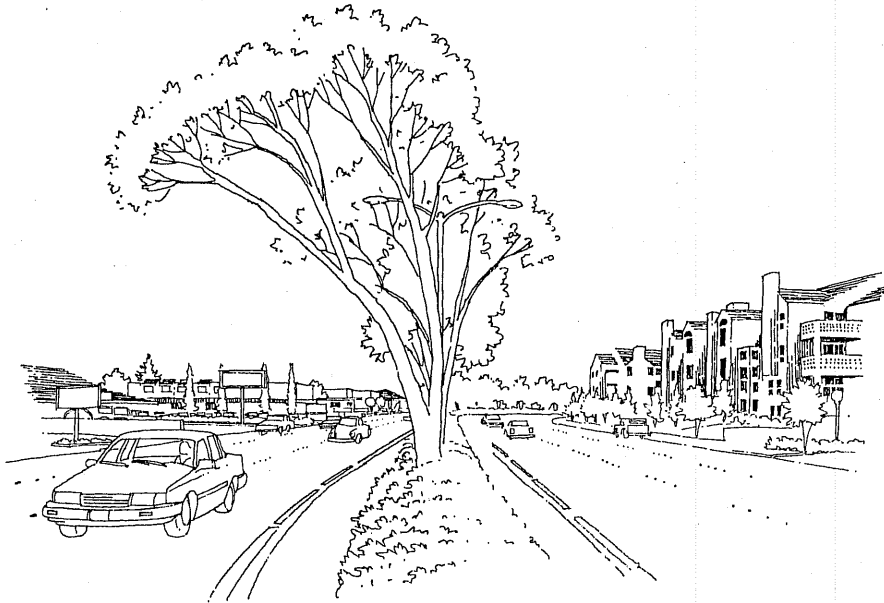
Sunnyvale is a large City bisected by many highways, expressways, arterials and collectors. Currently, there are no City monument signs or other distinctive features at these gateways to mark the municipal boundary and welcome people to Sunnyvale. Major gateways are shown on Figure 3. It may not be possible or desirable to create a distinctive gateway at each entry. The following general locations are some of the best opportunities for possible gateway improvements.

- Highway 237 and Highway 101
- Mathilda Avenue at Highway 101
- Sunnyvale-Saratoga Road at Homestead Road
- Lawrence Expressway at Highway 101
- Lawrence Expressway at Highway 237
- East and west ends of El Camino Real

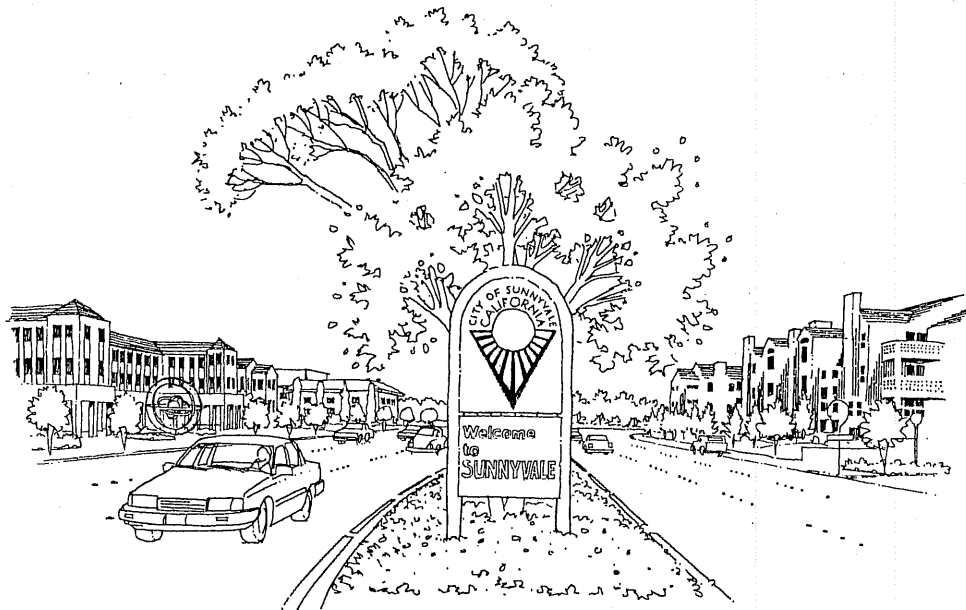
The new Baylands Park and the existing Municipal Golf Course are good opportunities to identify the gateways at both ends of Highway 237 as it passes through Sunnyvale. Gateways on El Camino Real are also important. El Camino Real is a major commercial district, an historic regional pathway and one of the primary routes to the downtown. Gateways on El Camino would identify Sunnyvale's boundaries and promote the El Camino Real and Downtown business districts. Mathilda Avenue at Highway 101 is another important gateway. It is a major route to the Downtown district and entry to significant industrial employment centers. Hotels and services for travelers are located on Mathilda Avenue. As a result, this gateway, along with those on El Camino Real or to the Downtown may be good locations for a visitor's information center. Lawrence Expressway at Highway 101 and Sunnyvale-Saratoga Road at Homestead are two other important gateways. These are both major commute routes with heavy volumes of traffic entering and leaving Sunnyvale.

Each gateway to Sunnyvale has its own character and purpose which will influence the type of improvements to distinguish that entry. Physical infrastructure and budget constraints will also affect the design. Improving a gateway can be as simple as a special landscape treatment or could be a more elaborate confluence of many design elements.

These improvements can be made by the City in the public right-of-way or be required on private properties when those sites development or redevelop. Gateways do not need to be located right at the municipal boundaries. It is more important that the gateway be where there is the potential for an attractive environment which will compliment Sunnyvale's image.



Before gateway improvements



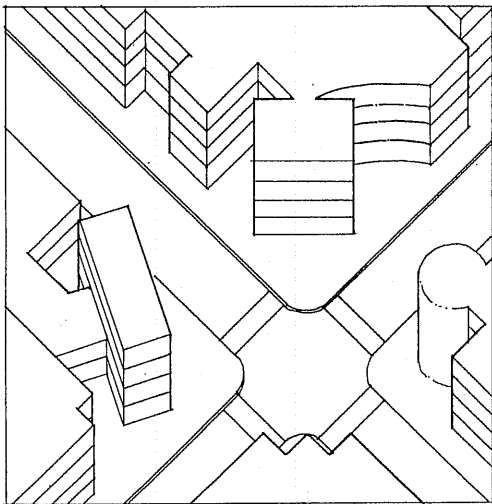
After gateway improvements.

Sunnyvale has budgeted for gateway improvements in 1993/1994. These improvements may include features such as signs and special landscaping. The City has also adopted a Specific Plan and approved a landmark project at the Lawrence Expressway/Highway 101 intersection with the intent of creating a distinctive gateway at this location.

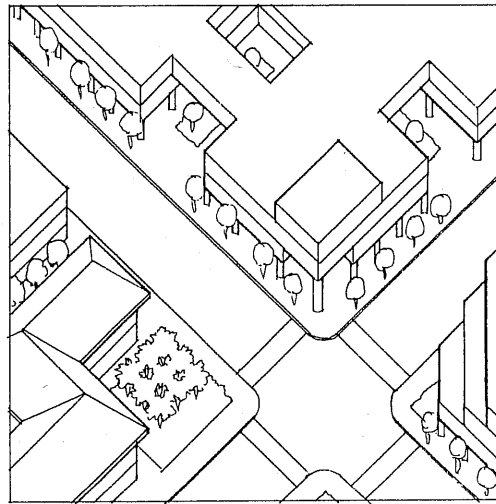
### Nodes

Traditionally, nodes are defined as activity centers within neighborhoods and districts. In suburban areas, a neighborhood shopping center could be considered a node. Nodes can also be places where major roadways meet, creating a break in the transportation corridors. At these breaks, there is a heightened sense of awareness for motorists, due to the time spent stopped and the high level of activity and interchange. The intersection of Mathilda Avenue and El Camino Real is this kind of node. Circulation nodes are indicated on the maps of City form (figure 3).

The type and quality of development at a node will leave a strong impression. The nodes on Mathilda Avenue at El Camino Real, Maude Avenue and California Avenue are particularly important because they are preludes to the downtown. Development at these intersections should create anticipation and be distinctive. This can be achieved with interesting architecture, higher buildings, a coherent spatial form, and amenities, such as plazas and artwork. A coherent spatial relationship is created by building setbacks, mass and height which are consistent on each corner. Buildings should also be close to the street to create enclosure and dynamic spaces between buildings.



Poor spatial relationship.



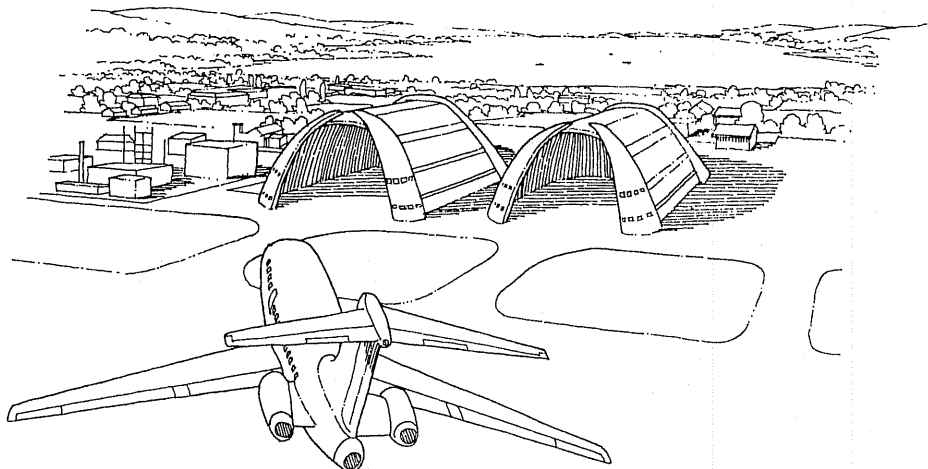
Good spatial relationship.

## Landmarks

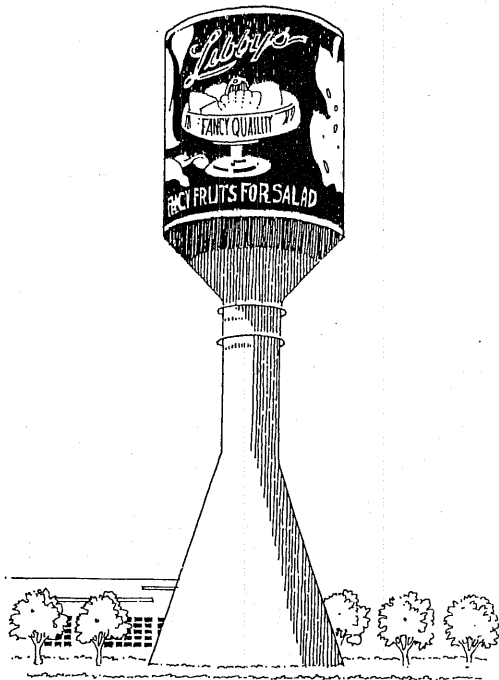
Landmarks are prominent structures or natural features which help orient people to their location. These landmarks can be different from historic landmarks, in that visibility is a defining characteristic. Landmarks have a practical as well as a cultural function. Many people navigate Sunnyvale by using landmarks, as well as other familiar buildings. Landmarks can be either vertical or horizontal. Generally, vertical landmarks are like beacons and can be seen from a great distance, while horizontal landmarks function like large sign posts along the way, providing a sense of familiarity for travelers. Landmarks are important because they help residents and visitors understand their environment and feel comfortable. Landmarks can also provide a focus for a district and enrich the identity of a city.

Landmarks will be most memorable if they have a clear form which stands out from their background. Landmarks can stand out because they are much taller than surrounding structures or they have a unique architectural style or they have a natural scenic quality which contrasts with surrounding urban development. Figure 3 shows the location of significant Sunnyvale landmarks in 1990.

The most visible landmarks in Sunnyvale are the Moffett Field dirigible hangars. These hangars are often difficult to see from within Sunnyvale, but are highly visible throughout the Bay Area and orient air travelers flying into the region. It is easy to locate Sunnyvale by locating the hangars. The hangars are distinguishable by their large size and unique shape which is in sharp contrast to the flat landing fields around them. Even though the hangars are no longer used for dirigibles, as a unique air technology they are early symbols of the aerospace industry to follow and representative of an important industry in Sunnyvale.



Moffett Naval Air Field



Libby Water Tower

Other landmarks in Sunnyvale include: vertical landmarks such as the Libby Water Tower, historic landmarks such as the Murphy Avenue Commercial District and horizontal landmarks, such as the cherry orchards on Mathilda Avenue near El Camino Real.

With suburban development where uniformity is dominant, landmarks add interest, variety and clarity to the living environment. Sunnyvale does not have a large inventory of landmarks and would benefit if new development provides distinctive buildings which add to this inventory. The City has approved a residential tower at Lawrence Expressway and Highway 101 which will become a new landmark, and there is the potential for additional landmarks in the Downtown district. New landmarks at these locations should have distinctive architecture which is readily visible and unique.

## Districts

Districts are special areas within a city which have a unique and unified character. Design policies should help districts to be visually distinct. If the various parts of a city are articulated then the whole image of the city will be richer and the identity of the City will be strengthened. Memorable districts create memorable cities.

Districts are most easily identified by the homogeneity of use and structures. Often districts are organized around a strong core, such as landmarks, schools, topographic features or important roadways. Districts can be distinguished from each other by the unique type and density of land use, similar architectural styles, the rhythm and spacing of buildings, similar landscaping or the type of internal street system. A district can have soft or strong boundaries. Defining the boundaries of a district is less important than the homogeneity of the internal elements. Strong edges can even hinder the transition between districts.

Sunnyvale has three basic types of districts: residential, commercial and industrial. These general types of districts are indicated on Figure 4, a map of general land uses in Sunnyvale. This map is meant to show broad patterns and does not include details on



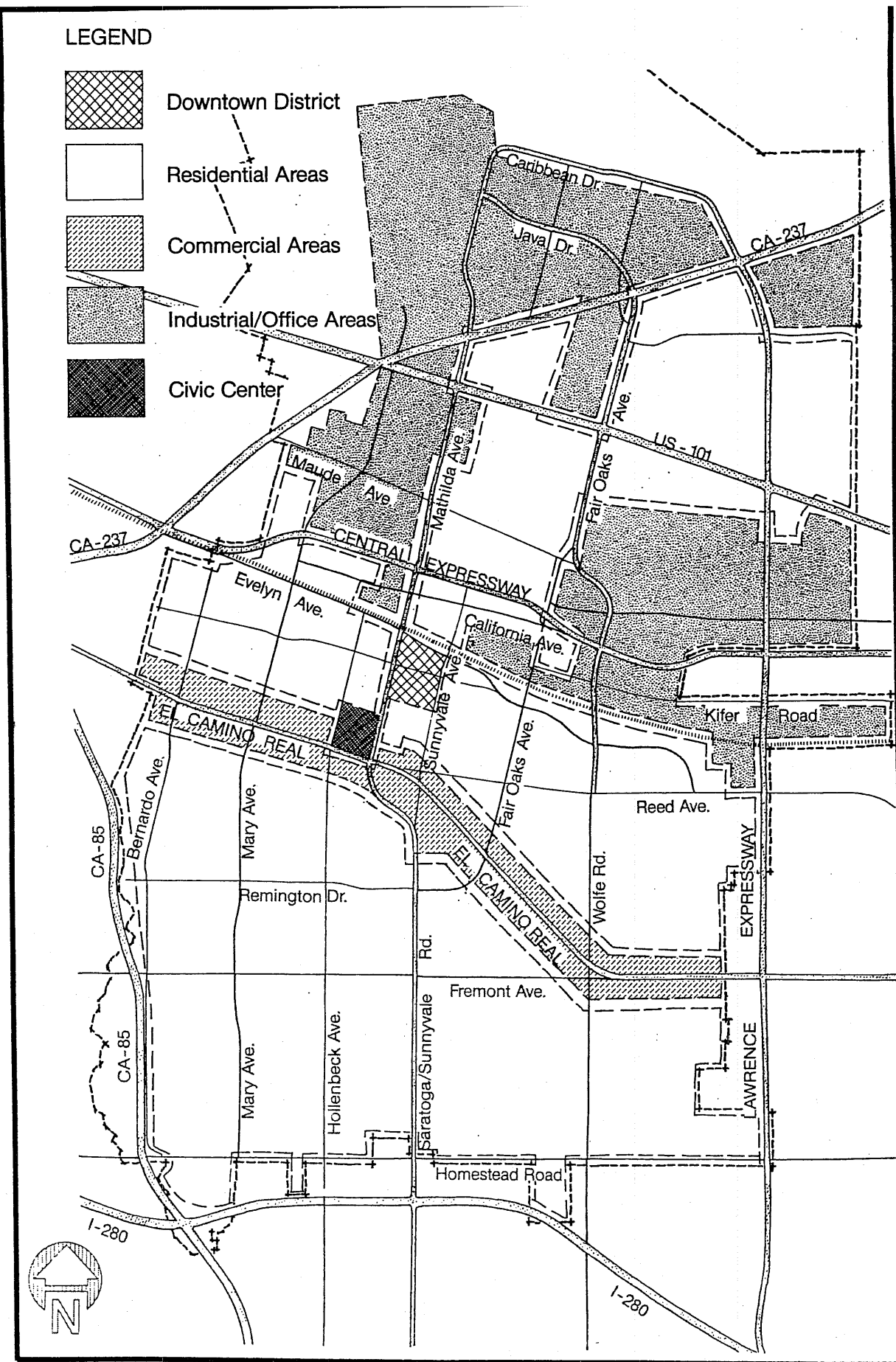


Figure 4: General Land Uses in Sunnyvale

zoning or commercial shopping centers in residential neighborhoods. Within these general districts, there are also special districts such as the El Camino Real commercial district, Moffett Park industrial district, Sunnyvale's Heritage Housing District and the Downtown. While there are some differences between districts in Sunnyvale, these differences are not strong distinctions. Most districts share a predominately homogeneous form of low horizontal structures and relatively similar building styles. There are opportunities to give more emphasis to the unique character of Sunnyvale's districts through architectural and streetscape design standards, particularly in areas which are redeveloping.

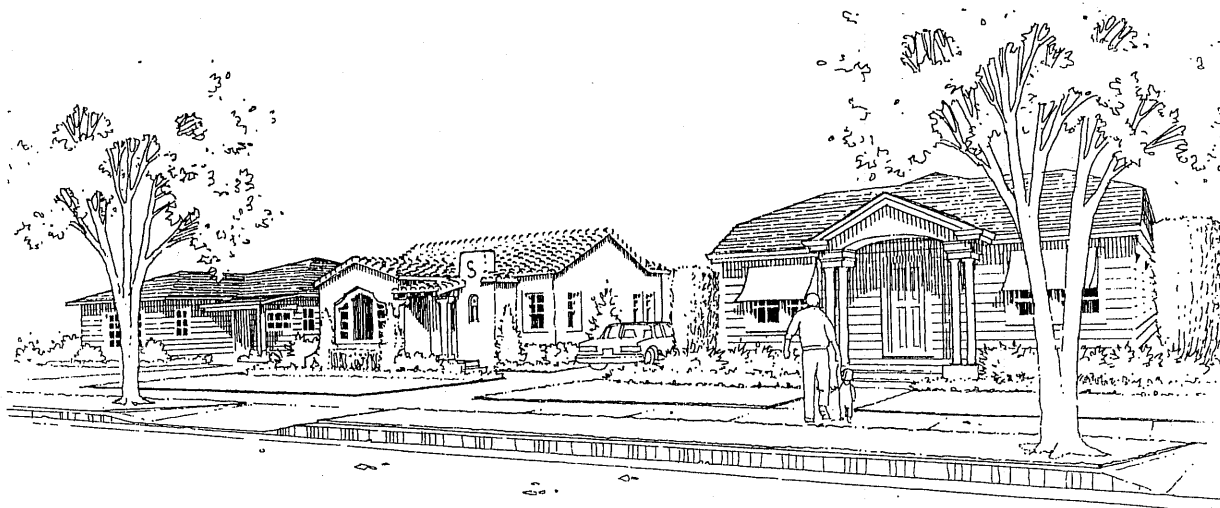
Residential, commercial and industrial districts have been created by the historic development pattern in Sunnyvale and further refined by the City's development regulations for private properties and public facilities. Zoning regulations have resulted in different land uses, building height, coverage, setbacks, parking and landscape standards for each district. Engineering and transportation safety standards have resulted in different street standards for each district.

Older districts often look different than newer districts because of changes in development regulations and building styles. For instance, older Sunnyvale residential neighborhoods often have narrow streets laid out in a grid pattern, small homes and reduced building setbacks. New residential districts often have curvilinear streets, larger homes and expansive front setbacks. Zoning regulations and public improvements should be sensitive to the unique character of each district. Infill projects should also be compatible with this character.



Historic Districts, such as Murphy Avenue, are particularly vulnerable to incompatible development

Some districts are more disrupted by change than others. Incompatible development has a damaging impact on the cohesiveness of the area and erodes its special quality. Historic districts are particularly vulnerable to change. These districts require additional policies and regulations to preserve their unique charm. Sunnyvale has a valuable resource of historic buildings and has adopted wide ranging programs to protect those resources. The City has established eight Heritage Landmarks, a Heritage Landmark commercial district, a Heritage Housing district and listed approximately 100 homes and trees on the Cultural Resources Inventory. Sunnyvale also has a Heritage Preservation Commission which oversees the recognition and protection of historic resources. Design Guidelines and policies have been established for both Heritage districts to insure compatible development. The City should continue to inventory its historic resources and consider appropriate regulations to protect these resources when they are threatened.



The Taaffe-Frances Heritage Housing District.

Specific Plans and design guidelines are useful tools to enhance or create unique districts. A specific plan is like a Zoning District, but also includes design features which strengthen the identity of a district. Specific plans can identify appropriate uses, set regulations for building height, setbacks or floor area ratios and establish landscaping standards, architectural design standards, unique street lighting, public plazas and special signage. Design guidelines are more limited and would generally not affect land use or building regulations. Sunnyvale currently has two Specific Plan areas; the Southern Pacific Corridor Specific Plan and the Lawrence Expressway/Highway 101 Site Specific Plan. Design guidelines and policies have been established for both of the City's historic districts. There are other districts in Sunnyvale which would benefit from specific plans or design guidelines.

Design guidelines and specific plans also help developers understand the expectations of the City early in their project design. It is important that the City provide developers with clear information on design regulations, policies and standards.

The City is now studying a Downtown Specific Plan which would establish development and design standards to revitalize this important district. Sunnyvale's downtown already has some outstanding attributes. The downtown is geographically located at the center of the City. This central location is close to industrial parks and residential neighborhoods, making it convenient for lunch, shopping and evening entertainment. In addition, Sunnyvale has a large and affluent population which can support downtown businesses. The low crime rate in the City and other excellent City services also support a vibrant, safe and attractive downtown. These attributes lay a solid foundation for a reemerging downtown.

A highly visible and vital image is particularly important downtown in order to attract new businesses and residents. The Downtown Specific Plan is a unique opportunity to locate higher density housing next to transit, shopping and entertainment. This mix of business and residential uses would result in continuous activity downtown. Ongoing activity creates a safer night time environment and avoids a downtown which is empty at night after stores and offices have closed. Cultural activities such as art galleries, museums and theaters are also important elements for a robust downtown. A Downtown Specific Plan will help create an exciting environment and a unified image which will enhance the identity of Sunnyvale and enrich the quality of life.

Specific plans or design guidelines would also be appropriate for the El Camino Real business district, Mathilda Avenue and Evelyn Avenue. The location of these districts is shown on Figure 5. El Camino Real and Mathilda Avenue are major arterials carrying large volumes of traffic. These two arterials intersect to form a major east/west and north/south axis. Many people get their impression of Sunnyvale from these roadways. Most of the City's businesses, industrial paths and government centers are located on or just off of El Camino Real or Mathilda Avenue. Evelyn Avenue is a transitional area where residential development is replacing industrial businesses. A Specific Plan could strengthen the evolving residential character of this roadway.

El Camino Real is an important thoroughfare and business district. Many of the City's commercial businesses, as well as new apartment and condominium projects are located on El Camino Real. Along this roadway, there is a mixture of restaurants, strip commercial centers, car dealerships, auto repair shops and housing. The businesses provide essential services to residents and visitors and contribute to a strong tax base for Sunnyvale.

A specific plan or design guidelines can do many simple things to promote the El Camino business district and make it a more attractive place to live and shop. A specific plan can establish design features which can unify and enhance the identity of the district. For